**Ch 6, User documentation, p 226-**

**Onscreen user documentation**

1. What is the nature of onscreen user documentation?

Onscreen user documentation refers to the information to provide guidance to users and is designed to be viewed on the screen of computer or other electronic devices. Onscreen documentation explains how to use a product or how to perform a procedure with the product.

1. List the 3 functions of onscreen user documentation?

The three functions that onscreen user documentation performs are:

* A user may refer to onscreen user documentation for instructions on assessing and using features of new programs or devices, or for instructions for using a product with which they are unfamiliar.
* A user in a workplace may refer to in-house onscreen user documentation for information on company procedures and policies for their information system.
* If a problem occurs while using a product the user may refer to a help file for an onscreen manual to find a solution.

**Types of onscreen user documentation:**

1. User guides and instruction manuals
   1. What is the purpose of these guides?

The purpose of these guidelines is to inform and instruct the user about the characteristics, capabilities and functions of the hardware and software. They will detail how to start using the product and how to perform typical actions with the product.

* 1. What are the two popular formats for onscreen user guides? Why?

The two popular formats for onscreen user guides are portable document format (PDF) and hypertext (browser-based). They are used because both of these formats support text and graphics, but can be conveniently small in file size. Also they both can be accessed on various platforms and operating systems.

* 1. What is a third party user guide?

The third party (means that it was made by a different organisation from the original manufacturer) user guide are available for many products in addition to the manufacturer’s own user guide.

**Describe the characteristics of the following types of onscreen user documentation.**

1. Quick start guides

Quick start guides are provided with an application or device for first time or inexperienced users of the product. They give brief advice and instructions that are simple on how to begin using the product, safe usage, and how to perform common tasks like opening a new file, accessing help files, saving files, printing and existing files.

1. In-house user documentation

In-house user documentation are guides and instruction manuals enable the employees or clients of an organisation to use an information system. They may include in-house protocols for the particular organisation (for example security procedures, file naming and file storing protocols).

1. Read me files

Read me files are provided by the manufacturer with hardware and software products. They contain important information for users, such as system requirements, configuration settings for the product, troubleshooting strategies, web support addresses, and details on how to access product updates.

1. Tutorials

A tutorial consists of step-by-step instructions for using the features and functions of a software program or hardware device. Tutorials may include text and graphics such as screen shots in a PDF or hypertext format, or they may be presented via a series of multimedia files that can include video and sound. Tutorials may be downloadable from the manufacturer’s website. Tutorials are also made by third party companies who sell them for profit.

1. Help files

Help files provide searchable information about the features and functions of a software application or device. Help files can be extensive, and may provide an overview of various topics as well as more detailed examples and tutorials. Help file may also contain extra information such as a glossary of specialised terms relating to the device.

1. Web support

This refers to the onscreen user documentation for software and hardware that is available directly from the manufacturer’s website. There will usually be a hyperlink to the relevant website from within the software applications. The web support will have things like FQAs, knowledge bases, troubleshooting advice and how to update the product.

1. Tool tips & hint boxes

These are also forms of onscreen user documentation, as they provide content-sensitive help to support the user in understanding and using a software product. Tool tips are within a software application and can be found usually by holding the cursor over an icon to highlight a text box with a short description of the function of the icon. Hint boxes are also within a software application and can be found by clicking on an icon which opens the hint box containing a short description of the icon and possibly a related graphic. Hint boxes are also content-sensitive help but can be turned off by experienced users who do not require the software hints.

Darcie Anderson